

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. In a television network environment, the television network environment being a switched digital video system, a cable-based system, and satellite-based system, a method for delivering targeted advertisements to one or more subscribers, the method comprising:
 - selecting one or more targeted advertisements to be transmitted to one or more subscribers;
 - grouping one or more selected advertisements in a group; and
 - transmitting the grouped advertisements to the subscriber equipment.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the advertisements are grouped in a time-division multiplexed channel.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the time-division multiplexed channel is a high-speed channel.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein the time-division multiplexed channel is an analog channel.

5. The method of claim 2, wherein the advertisements are grouped in an ATM-based channel.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the ATM-based channel is a 6 MHz digital channel.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the ATM-based channel is a Virtual Path Identifier/Virtual Channel Identifier (VPI/VCI).

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the grouped advertisements are encoded and transmitted as conventional programming.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of advertisement channels are comprised within a single 6 MHz digital channel.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
assigning each selected advertisement a unique AD_ID;
assigning each set-top box (STB) to one or more groups;
forming a time-division multiplexed channel by utilizing different AD_IDs;

forming a timing table associated with the time-division multiplexed channel, the timing table illustrating the timing of the various advertisement groups; and

transmitting the time-division multiplexed channel and the
5 timing table to one or more STBs.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the STB uses the timing table used to select appropriate advertisements from the time-division multiplexed channel.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the time-division multiplexed channel comprises one or more time slots, each time slot hosting a group of advertisements.

15 13. The method of claim 10, wherein the set-top box decodes the received time-division multiplexed channel and identifies the timing of the advertisement to be downloaded.

20 14. The method of claim 10, wherein the set-top box further identifies which advertisements to store, and saves the identified advertisement during one or more corresponding splice windows.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

assigning each selected advertisement a unique AD_ID;

forming one or more advertisement groups by utilizing unique

5 AD_IDs;

assigning each advertisement group to a unique VPI/VCI,

thereby creating a GROUP-VPI/VCI table; and

transmitting each group of advertisements on a selected

VPI/VCI to one or more subscribers.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein each STB receives one
or more advertisements for the corresponding STB.

17. The method of claim 15, wherein the GROUP-VPI/VCI table
15 comprises the identity of the STBs, the identity of the
advertisement group, and the identity of the VPI/VCI channel.

18. In a television network environment, the television
network environment being a switched digital video system, a
20 cable-based system, and a satellite-based system, an
advertisement management system comprising:

an advertisement channel generator for receiving one or more advertisements and their corresponding group information and generating an advertisement channel comprising the advertisements and the associated group information; and

5 a set-top box for receiving the advertisement channel and the corresponding advertisements.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the set-top box further comprises a memory for storing the selected advertisements.

20. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the advertisement channel is a VPI/VCI channel.

15 21. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein each STB receives one or more advertisements corresponding to the assigned VPI/VCI channel.

22. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the advertisement
20 channel is a time-division multiplexed channel.

23. The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the time-division multiplexed channel comprises timing information corresponding to each of the advertisement groups.

5 24. The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the STB retrieves one or more advertisements by identifying the corresponding timing information.